

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1108

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 3777

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA

SUBJ: MONIQUE BEGIN NEW MINISTER OF NATIONAL REVENUE

REF: OTTAWA 3705

1. ONIQUE BEGIN WAS SEPTEMBER 14, NAMED MINISTER OF NATIONAL REVENUE. FOLLOWING IS RELEVANT BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION.

2. LIBERAL MP - SAINT-MICHEL. BORN MARCH 1, 1936 IN ROME, ITALY. EDUCATED AT NOTRE-DAME-DE-GRACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MONTREAL, ESTHER BLONDIN HS, MONTREAL, ESTHER BLONDIN TEACHERS' COLL, RIGAUD, UNIV OF MONTREAL, UNIV OF PARIS AND MCGILL UNIV. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY GENERAL ROYAL COMM ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN CAN 1967-70; FIRST ELECTED TO HOUSE OF COMMONS GEN ELEC 1972. APPOINTED PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, OCT 75.

3. COMMENT: MONIQUE BEGIN IS AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN WHOSE FEMINITY SHOULD NOT OBSCURE HER ACTIVE AND HARD-NOSED APPROACH BOTH TO POLITICS AND THE AFFAIRS OF GOVERNMENT. SOME MEASURE OF HER POLITICAL RESILIENCY IS THE FACT THAT HER ST. MICHEL RIDING IS REPORTEDLY AMONG THE TOUGHEST AND MOST ETHNIC OF THE METRO-MONTREAL CONSTITUENCIES. BEGIN IS NO SHRINKING-VIOLET.

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REPORTEDLY, PRIOR TO THE SEPT 14 CABINET

SHUFFLE, SHE GAVE PM TRUDEAU AN ULTIMATUM THAT SHE WOULD RESIGN HER SEAT IF SHE WAS NOT GIVEN A CABINET POSITION. ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT, SHE REFUSED A FIRST OFFER OF A MINISTRY OF STATE FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS AND HELD OUT FOR A BIGGER JOB.

4. BORN IN ROME, BEGIN LEFT EUROPE WITH HER FAMILY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND AN INFANT SIBLING WAS KILLED BY BOMBING DURING THEIR FLIGHT. BEGIN'S UPBRINGING WAS IN MODEST CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF UNUSUALLY STRONG PARENTS. REPORTEDLY, BEGIN REBELLED AT AN EARLY AGE AGAINST THE THEN STIFLING FRENCH-CANADIAN STRUCTURE DOMINATED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SOMETIMES CORRUPT POLITICS. SHE IS, HOWEVER, A FIRM CANADIAN FEDERALIST AND, SO FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, HAS NO SEPARATIST SYMPATHIES.

5. FORMERLY ACTIVE IN THE FIGHT TO UPGRADE THE STATUS OF WOMEN, SHE HAS TOTALLED DISCARDED ANY FORMAL ROLE IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT ALTHOUGH SHE REMAINS SYMPATHETIC TO THAT CAUSE. FLUENT AND UNUSUALLY ARTICULATE IN BOTH ENGLISH AND FRENCH, BEGIN IS A HARD WORKER AND A QUICK LEARNER. ALTHOUGH SHE WAS ADMITTEDLY A NEOPHYTE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHEN SHE BECAME EX-TRAFF PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, SHE LEARNED QUICKLY ON THE JOB AND WAS AMONG THE MOST EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES PRIOR TO HER ELEVATION TO CABINET. WE EXPECT THAT SHE WILL ABSORB THE DUTIES OF HER NEW PORTFOLIO QUICKLY.

ENDERS

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